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LETTER DATED 4 NOVEMBER 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ZAMBIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I write to notify you, and through you, the Security Council, of a regional meeting of Foreign and Defence Ministers on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, held in Lusaka on 26 and 27 October 1998.

The meeting, chaired by Zambia, marked yet another step in the search for an end to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. At the end of the regional meeting, a press statement was issued and, in view of the fact that the President of Zambia has been mandated by his regional colleagues to spearhead the search for a political solution in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I would like to request you to circulate the attached press statement as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Peter L. KASANDA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Press statement issued by the regional meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, held at Lusaka on 26 and 27 October 1998

At the invitation of President Frederick J. T. Chiluba of the Republic of Zambia, the regional meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was held in Lusaka from 26 to 27 October 1998. The meeting, which was chaired by E. S. Silwamba, MP, Minister for Presidential Affairs of Zambia, was attended by Ministers from Angola, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Kenya, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Also in attendance were the representatives of the United Nations and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

The opening session of the meeting was addressed by the President of the Republic of Zambia, Mr. Frederick J. T. Chiluba, the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity, a representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Executive Secretary of SADC.

The meeting focused on issues relating to the cessation of hostilities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the establishment of a ceasefire agreement, the mechanisms for implementing the ceasefire agreement, the withdrawal of foreign forces, addressing the security concerns of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of the neighbouring countries, as well as other follow-up mechanisms for facilitating the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

At the end of a comprehensive review of all these issues, the meeting:

1. Adopted in principle a draft ceasefire agreement, and also a mechanism for implementing and monitoring a ceasefire agreement, pending further consultations with all concerned. In this regard, there was an acknowledgement by Angola, Namibia, Uganda and Zimbabwe of the presence of their troops in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Rwanda did not acknowledge the presence of its troops in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

2. Established a mechanism for the involvement of the rebels in working out the modalities for the implementation of the ceasefire. In this regard, proximity talks with the rebels were to be facilitated by the following:

Zambia, as Chairman of the Meeting
Organization of African Unity
United Nations
Southern African Development Community
Mozambique
South Africa
The United Republic of Tanzania

Within the framework of the established mechanism, consultations were undertaken with the rebels in Lusaka on 26 and 27 October 1998.

3. With regard to the security concerns of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the neighbouring countries, the following countries: Angola, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda, explained in detail their security concerns. The meeting resolved to address these concerns through a mechanism involving military experts to be established in the future.

4. The meeting expressed its gratitude to the Government and the people of Zambia for the warm reception and hospitality extended to all participants in the meeting.